

Julie E. Czerneda

A Somewhat Longer Look ...

Julie Czerneda is a Canadian author and editor whose first novel, *A Thousand Words for Stranger*, was published in 1997 by DAW Books. Since then, Julie has produced over a dozen more novels, edited fifteen anthologies, and written numerous short stories. Her work has won awards, consistently made bestseller lists, and garnered praise from readers and reviewers around the world.



Who knew?

Not Julie.

From childhood, reading and writing science fiction had been her private pastimes. In the “real world” she studied biology, eventually doing graduate research in the evolution of animal communication and behaviour. At night, she’d use storytelling to conduct experiments impossible in the lab. It wasn’t until she took maternity leave from a teaching position at university that her writing talents were set loose on the world -- by educational publishing. Starting in 1985, Julie became a full time author and editor of non-fiction educational materials, primarily in science, and contributed to over 250 titles from elementary to college level. A career was set. Or was it?

Fortunately, Roger, Julie’s husband and best friend, found out about the twenty-three science fiction novels, none finished, that lived in her filing cabinet. With his ally, Trudy Rising (Julie’s non-fiction publisher), Roger encouraged Julie to finish, then try to sell her fiction. So she picked the longest, wrote the ending, and sent it out. For those curious, it was Novel X (ten) in the cabinet.

After every newbie mistake possible (ask her sometime), Julie’s first novel ended up in the hands of Sheila Gilbert at DAW, who set it loose on the world. *Beholder's Eye*, published 1998, became the first in Julie’s Web Shifters series, featuring her beloved character, Esen the Blue. The same year, Julie was a finalist for the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer and DAW contracted for three more novels.

It was while writing *Beholder's Eye* that Julie realized writing fiction was no longer her hobby but a true passion. Not to mention marvelous fun! Although at this point she was the senior science editor at a major publishing house and writing material for a new grade nine optics chapter, she took the plunge and left educational publishing behind, except where it overlapped with science fiction.

The family calmly accepted Kraft Dinner and a mom who mumbled about aliens at the table as the consequence.



Julie has kept busy ever since. Never one to sit still, her editorial background led her to the happy discovery that she loved working with other writers, particularly new ones. She continues to edit science fiction and fantasy anthologies, and gives writing workshops. During her educational publishing days, she'd done workshops using sf in the classroom, ultimately writing *No Limits: Developing Scientific Literacy Using Science Fiction* (published by Trudy Rising, then of Trifolium Books). This led to award-winning anthology series for school use: *Tales from the Wonder Zone* (original SF) and *Realms of Wonder* (original fantasy) from Fitzhenry and Whiteside. For several years, Julie was SF consultant to *Science News* and helped develop the SciFiZone website as part of *Science News for Kids*. She continues to do workshops for educators and the public on the value of science fiction to science and citizenship.



But her heart is firmly in her stories. Julie attributes her love of writing to the advice of her mother. “When I didn't like the ending of a book, Mom gave me a typewriter and suggested I write my own. I never stopped.”

Julie grew up on air force bases, her family moving with each transfer from Ontario to Prince Edward Island and finally to Nova Scotia. When her father became a civilian, the family moved to Ontario, settling in what was then a rural setting near the shores of Lake Ontario and is now Mississauga. A thorough gypsy, Julie pursued her interest in biology at the Universities of Waterloo, Saskatoon, and Queen's (Kingston) accompanied by her former chemistry partner and now husband Roger.



Pausing briefly in St. Jacobs to produce offspring, Julie and Roger moved a few more times before making their latest home in central Ontario, where they can slip away into wilderness in their canoe at a moment's notice.



Why does Julie enjoy writing about aliens? “As a biologist, the twists and tricks of living things always fascinate me. We live in a world of hang-gliding spiders, forests consisting of a single tree, and fish that sing. I can't imagine a universe that didn't contain different forms of life.”

What's ahead? “In the immediate future, my first fantasy novel, the finale to Sira's story from Thousand, more Esen, another fantasy novel, and hopefully more anthologies.” After that?

“Oh, I'm just getting started. That's the most fun of all.”